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Reading Ovid's Rapes

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You are the inspiration for a poet, he seemed to say. If you think you are being spied on, tell your parents. They will think you are silly and hysterical. They will tell you how great art is made.

—Laurie Colwin, "A Girl Skating" (1982)

He gives kisses to the wood; still the wood shrinks from his kisses.
To which Apollo said: "But since you will not be able to be my wife,
you will surely be my tree."

—Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.556–58 (Apollo and Daphne)

I don't particularly want to chop up women but it seems to work.

—Brian De Palma (quoted in Pally 1984)

A woman reading Ovid faces difficulties. In the tradition of Western literature his influence has been great, yet even in his lifetime critics found his poetry disturbing because of the way he applied his wit to unfunny circumstances. Is his style a virtue or a flaw? Like an audience watching a magician saw a lady in half, they have stared to see how it was done. I would like to draw attention to the lady.

Consider Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, cast as a mythic history of the world: more than fifty tales of rape in its fifteen books (nineteen told at some length). Compare his *Fasti*, a verse treatment of the Roman religious calendar: ten tales of rape in six books. These vary in their treatment; some are comic. In general, critics have ignored them, or traced their literary origins, or said they stood for something else or evidenced the poet's sympathy with women.

But we must ask how we are to read texts, like those of Ovid, that take pleasure in violence—a question that challenges not only the canon of Western literature but all representations. If the pornographic is that which converts living beings into objects, such texts are certainly pornographic. Why is it a lady in the magician's box? Why do we watch a pretended evisceration?

Critical Orientation

Before beginning to analyze the text, I offer some cautions and a theoretical framework.

Problems in writing: (1) The text I am writing is metapornography and partakes of the same subject-object relationship, the same "gaze," that structures its object. (2) Similarly, criticism and theory have been tools of the patriarchy and may not be useful toward subversion (see Jehlen 1981; E. Kaplan 1983: 313; Lorde 1984). (3) To write about Ovid keeps the focus on the male writers of the canon. But this does not exclude ancient women (*pace* Culham 1990): the nature of Ovid's rapes surely bears on the lives of the women who heard his poems and live(d) in the sign system that produced the canon. And one option is to do the best we can with the tools and materials at hand.

My goals are to hold up the content of some canonical texts to a political scrutiny and to suggest a theoretical model that enables escape from the trap of representation in the hierarchy.

Axioms: Content is never arbitrary or trivial; content is not an accident of a text but an essential. A text about rape may also be about something else, but it is still a text of rape. A seductive treatment is standard equipment for any fantasy; stylistic analysis does not replace content analysis and, in fact, leaves us to explain what that style is doing on that content, like a bow on a slaughterhouse.

Moreover, there is a reciprocal relationship between the content of the text and the lives of the text's consumers. Stylistic beauties serve to expedite the absorption of content by the audience, though the narrative structure directs audiences even without the stylistic adornment of high-culture texts—tragedy is to weep at, comedy is to laugh at, and so on. To resist the direction of narrative because of content is to break the rules; but such a breakdown in the perpetual motion of text and life is possible. For example, here, even in the thick of metapornography.

Otherwise my theoretical framework is fourfold:

Rereading in the Classics

As its name suggests, Classics is not wide open to the idea of a re-formation of the canon. This has been true even for feminists in the field (see analysis in Skinner 1986, 1987a, 1987b). So even recent studies of Ovid by feminists (Myerowitz 1985; Verducci 1985) have kept their eyes focused on the magician rather than the lady; others have set out to absolve the poet of his apparent sexism, concentrating on the distinction between poet and persona and the effect this has on the message of the text (Cahoon 1985; Hemker 1985).

But these readings join the magician's act as he saws away. Erased from the field of vision: the price of admission, the place of male and female onstage, the experience of the magician's assistant, the voyeurism and gaze of the audience, the motivation of the magician himself, the blood that is not really dripping from the box. In order to confront the canon and explain what is going on in Ovid's act, we need other ways of reading.

Feminism For and Against Pornography

The feminist controversy over the nature and danger (or use) of pornography contributes a basis for a political critique of texts like Ovid's. The argument against pornography holds that the common images of women contribute to the oppression of women (e.g., S. Griffin 1981; Lederer 1980; see Echols 1983); the argument in favor of pornography has highlighted sadomasochism, both in fantasy and in reality, as a valid sexual mode, and/or claimed that violent images are cathartic and/or not harmful. The nonjudgmental stance coincides with the anthropologist's and the classicist's yearning for objectivity. But these arguments again elide some questions. Why should sexuality and violence be so commonly connected? Represented? Can a person have a right to be physically abused? Is violence inevitable and uncontrollable? Do cultural or historical differences excuse anything?

Fantasy and Representation

Theories of representation, starting with the formulation of the gaze as male, trace the link between gender and violence (esp. Berger 1972; E. Kaplan 1983; de Lauretis 1984). Studies sometimes claim that the explicit content of a fantasy is not its meaning. Here, as E. Ann Kaplan has noted (1983: 320), there is a danger of losing sight of content altogether: "If certain feminist groups (i.e., Women Against Pornography) err on the side of eliding reality with fantasy . . . , feminist [literary] critics err on the side of seeing a world constructed only of signifiers, of losing contact with the 'referred' world of the social formulation."

Thus, analysis of Ovid's rapes as figures of the artist's predicament dodges the questions of why rape is the figure of choice and what its effects might be on its audience.

Questions of complicity and origin arise in any discussion of culturewide fantasy. What of the women in the audience? Is there a female gaze? Is gaze itself gendered, in a way separate from social gender? Whose idea is it to saw a lady in half? Can specifically female fantasies be isolated? (This critique dates back to Mary Wollstonecraft.) It is possible to trace historical change (see, e.g., Thurston 1987); still, within the closed system of the patriarchy (Lorde's "master's house"), women, as a muted group (Ardener 1975), can speak audibly only in the master's language, whether or not their speaking transmutes the language (as claimed, e.g., by Maclean 1987; see Elsom, Montague, and Marsh in this volume).

Yet if, with the most radical critiques, we say "Art will have to go" (Kappeler 1986), where do we go? The problem here is the gap between our ability to analyze the problem and our ability to realize a solution.

Gender and Reading

Feminist literary criticism endeavors, in part, to come to grips with problems of gender and reading (so also Gubar 1987). Two of its strategies—canon reformation and appropriation—are particularly pertinent to reading Ovid.

As Teresa de Lauretis says (1984: 107), "any radical critique [entails] a rereading of the sacred texts against the passionate urging of a different question, a different practice, and a different desire." Feminist critics advise readers to resist the text (Fetterley 1978), to read against the text, to misread or reread the text (Kolodny 1985), to reject the canon of Western literature and make a new one, or end canons altogether (Fetterley 1986; Kolodny 1985; Showalter 1985: 19–122). Three things to do with a lot of male-based texts: throw them out, take them apart, find female-based ones instead. (This critique goes back to *A Room of One's Own.*)

Another approach is of special interest; our prefeminist sisters had it as their only option (other than silence or co-optation). This is the appropriation of male-based texts; becoming, in Claudine Herrmann's phrase, *voleuses de langue*, "women thieves of language" (or "of the tongue"), taking myths and reseeing them (Ostriker 1985). As it happens, a myth of Ovid's has seemed important to steal: Philomela, raped, her tongue cut out, weaving her story to her sister who had thought her dead; Philomela, who may have become the nightingale. Her story has been claimed by a male critic as the voice of poetry and reclaimed by a feminist as a paradigm of woman writer and reader (Joplin 1985); claimed by Virginia Woolf in *Between the Acts* and reclaimed by her feminist reader (Marcus 1983, 1984). The misreading of texts here is deliberate, heroic; as Patricia Joplin says (1985), "we have a rescue to perform. Those who gave us the sad news that we had no sister lied to us." But we realize just how heroic an act the rescue of myths must be when we look at how Philomela and her sisters are known to us.

Gazing at the Text

Texts are inseparable from their cultures, and so, before looking at Ovid's rapes, we need a context. We know that Ovid was a popular writer; law students emulated his rhetorical tricks, schoolboys read his stories (Bonner 1949; 1977: 217). How might Ovid's rapes have fit in with the cultural experience of his audience?

We know that great numbers of people attended theatrical shows and wild beast "games" that exhibit some of the same traits as Ovid's writing: portrayal of sexual scenes from Greek myth, especially in the polymorphous theater of the pantomime (Beare 1955); savage and gruesome deaths (Hopkins 1983, Barton 1989). Wealthy people had representations of such scenes in their houses (see Myerowitz and Brown in this volume). The practice cases of the rhetorical schools where Ovid was trained often dealt with rape and violence (Bonner 1949). Roman humor is full of rape; a series of first-century jokes focuses on the god Priapus, who graphically threatens male and female thieves with rape (Richlin 1983). And from Pompeii have been recovered phallic wind chimes, birdbaths, statues of Priapus, phallic paving stones (Grant 1975). Roman law on rape was ill defined, real cases rarely attested, and the victim was blamed (Dixon 1982; Gardner 1986; see Joshel, Chapter 6 above). All slaves were, more or less, the sexual property of their owners; on the other hand, in Ovid's Rome the new emperor Augustus was attempting to reform family life among the aristocracy (Richlin 1981).

Ovid's rapes play a significant role in his work. He was the last great Augustan poet, having outlived his more conventional coevals, and he wrote prolifically; here

I will look at sections of only three of his works, though my analysis could well be extended. In the *Metamorphoses,* rape keeps company with twisted loves, macabre and bloody deaths, cruel gods, cataclysms of nature (the Flood, Phaethon's fire), wars, and, of course, grotesque transformations. Rapes (some Ovid's) fill Arachne's tapestry in Book 6, and, like threads in a tapestry, the themes in the poem run in and out of sight; sometimes a horror in a half-line, sometimes half a book, sometimes gone. The rapes in the *Fasti* adorn the etiologies of Roman religious festivals, while the two in the *Ars Amatoria* contrast with the normal suavity of the narrator's advice. But the poems overall share a certain point of view, and the rapes capture its essence.

The Metamorphoses*: Rapes and Transformations*

DAPHNE'S FEARFUL BEAUTY

The attempted rape of Daphne by Apollo, one of Ovid's best-known passages, is almost the first event in the poem after the Flood. At once the narrative directs the reader's gaze. Daphne begins the episode as a nymph and ends as a laurel tree; in between, she flees from the god, who appears ridiculous and fails to rape Daphne as a nymph (though he has his way with her as a tree). But look at Daphne in her flight (1.525–30):

> As he was about to say more, the daughter of Peneus, with timid pace, 525
> flees him, and leaves his uncompleted speech, along with him.
> Even then she looked [literally *visa* (*est*), "was seen"] pretty; the winds laid bare her body,
> and the breezes as she met them fluttered her clothing as it came against them,
> and the light breeze made her locks go out behind her,
> and her beauty [*forma*] was increased by her flight.[1] 530

Indeed, your looking at her is the point. Does the fact that the narrator's voice is not identical with the voice of the historical Ovid undercut this? Is this the point of view only of the buffoonish god? Hardly; glazed thinly, if at all, by its literary mechanisms, there is Daphne's body. Ovid liked this trick; he says of Leucothoe during her rape, "fear itself became her" (*M.* 4.230); of Europa, "and fear itself was a cause of new beauty" (*Fasti* 5.608); of the Sabines, "and fear itself was able to adorn many of them" (*Ars Amatoria* 1.126); of Lucretia, spied on by her future rapist, "this itself was becoming: her chaste tears became her" (*Fasti* 2.757). And the display of the woman's body and fear to her rapist-to-be (and reader) often precedes her rape; Arethusa, who flees her rapist naked, is made to testify: "because I was naked, I looked readier for him" (5.603). Curran (1984) has argued that the narrator's consciousness of the victims' fear shows his empathy for them; but surely the narrator stresses how visually attractive the disarray of flight, and fear itself, made the victim (see Joshel, Chapter 6 above).

PHILOMELA'S TONGUE

Like R-rated movies, Ovid's rapes are not sexually explicit. But no such limits hamper the poem's use of violence, which sometimes stands in for the sexual, as most vividly in the story of Philomela (*M.* 6.424–674; see Galinsky 1975: 110–53).

Ovid begins the tale when Procne, daughter of the king of Athens, marries the barbarian Tereus. They go off to Thrace, and Procne duly bears a baby boy, Itys. Five years pass; then Procne wants to see her sister, Philomela. Tereus goes down to Athens to fetch her, gazes at her, and lusts after her; he wishes he were Philomela's father, so he could fondle her (475–82); and he fantasizes about the body that lies beneath her clothes (490–93). He then takes her back to Thrace, but not to her sister; in a hut in the woods, he rapes her. Here Philomela is a rabbit to Tereus's eagle (note esp. 518: "there is no flight for the one captured, the captor [*raptor*] watches his prize"). Moreover, she is grammatically passive, while Tereus is grammatically active. He is the subject of all the verbs, she is the object, except where the verbs signify fear (e.g., "she trembles," 527). The rape itself takes two and a half lines and is indeed inexplicit; though when Philomela is next compared to an animal, she is a lamb wounded by the wolf's mouth, a dove with feathers bloodied by greedy talons. We are reminded that she had been a virgin.

After the rape, Philomela makes a long and rhetorically polished speech, and Tereus's fear and anger at her threats are so strong that he cuts out her tongue (549–60):

> After the wrath of the wild tyrant was stirred up by such words,
> no less his fear, spurred on by either cause, 550
> he frees from its sheath the sword with which he was girt,
> and he forces her, having been grasped by the hair, with her arms bent behind her back,
> to suffer bonds; Philomela was readying her throat
> and had conceived a hope of her own death once she had seen the sword;
> he, as [] was reproaching and calling out on the name of "father" 555
> and struggling to speak, having been grasped by the forceps,
> ripped out her tongue with wild sword; the utmost root of the tongue flickers,
> []self [] lies and, trembling, mutters into the dark earth,
> and as the tail of a mutilated snake will jump,
> [] quivers, and, dying, seeks the trail of [] mistress. 560

Tereus's first action after the rape (551) is to remove his sword from its sheath; an action parallel to the rape is about to take place. But here we get details not given for the rape, with a list of further actions—by, as we gradually discover, three actors: Tereus, Philomela (who only bares her neck and hopes for death), and Philomela's tongue. All the verbs and participles from 555 on of which Tereus is the subject take a single object, heralded by a remarkable cluster of modifiers: "reproaching" (555), "calling out" (555), "struggling to speak" (556), "having been grasped by the forceps" (556). The surprise here is that the postponed object (indicated by [] in the text) is not Philomela, as the feminine modifiers lead the reader to expect, but *linguam,* "tongue" (556)—a feminine noun that here stands in for the feminine victim both grammatically and literally.

The point of view now switches vividly to that of the tongue itself: 558, *ipsa iacet,* "herself, she lies there" (like a person, a victim of violence); 558, *terraeque tremens inmurmurat atrae* (the tongue itself makes its own speech; note the effect of the repeated *t*'s and *r*'s, sounds made with the tongue); 560, "she quivers" (recall-

ing, with "trembling" [558] the verbs of earlier clusters associated with Philomela [522–23, 527–30]). Finally, dying as Philomela cannot, the tongue like the snake's tail seeks the body of which it once had been a part.

What are we to make of "muttering into the dark earth" and the comparison to a snake? This image complex is more familiar from the *Eumenides*—a woman, the earth, darkness, the snake (often opposed as a sign to the eagle, here associated with Tereus). Earlier, Procne's marriage had been attended by the Furies; later, the two sisters turn into Fury-like creatures (esp. 595, 662). The "dark earth" tallies with the dark night within human beings (472–74, 652) and with the locus of the crimes committed in this tale—against Philomela in the hut in the deep forest, and soon against Itys in the depths of the house (638; cf. 646, "the innards of the house [*penetralia*] drip with gore"). The simile, so close to her mutilation, surprises us with a new view of Philomela—a snake rather than a lamb or dove. Is the text shifting its sympathies?

The end of the tale bears out this suggestion. Tereus keeps Philomela shut up in the hut, and rapes her occasionally, for a year. Philomela cleverly weaves an account of her experience and sends the weaving to her sister via a servant. Procne, reading Philomela's web as a "pitiable poem" about "her own" lot (see Gamel n.d.), rescues Philomela and plans a way to get back at Tereus: the two sisters will butcher Procne's son Itys, cook him, and serve him to Tereus for dinner. (When they seize Itys, the poet describes him with an object cluster [639–40] like the ones he used of Philomela, and her tongue, earlier.) When Tereus discovers what has happened, he calls on the *vipereas sorores*, the "snaky sisters" (i.e., the Furies; 662) and jumps at the two sisters before him with his sword: they turn into birds with marks of blood on their feathers, while he turns into a bird with a spearlike bill.

Ovid's story of Philomela has been construed as a sympathetic and accurate picture of a rape and its aftermath, and of a reading of one woman's plight by a sister woman (Curran 1984; Bergren 1983; cf. Gamel n.d.; Joplin 1985; Marcus 1983, 1984). But something else is going on here. Ovid has shifted the focus of dramatic attention in this tale forward off the rape and backward off the metamorphosis, onto the scene of the cutting out of Philomela's tongue. Is it decorum that makes the poet omit the details of the rape? If so, it is a decorum that allows him to show us what the inside of her mouth looks like with the tongue cut out of it. This is a conflation of violence with sex.

The cutting out of Philomela's tongue is the sort of set piece that was increasingly to characterize Latin literature in the first century A.D. (G. Williams 1978: 184–92). Her unexpectedly eloquent speech immediately after her rape, which seems to make the mutilation such a comment on speech and gender, is also the kind of anomaly Ovid plays with elsewhere; for example, Latona's speech to the farmers when she is too thirsty to speak (*M.* 6.349–59) or the speech of the satyr Marsyas as he is being flayed (*M.* 6.385–86). I echo the critics who quote Dryden's comment: "If this were Wit, was this a Time to be witty, when the poor wretch was in the Agony of Death?" (Galinsky 1975: 77n, 132–33; Gamel n.d.: n. 17). But the very source of this wit is the delighted incongruity of clever style with gruesome subject matter (cf. Verducci 1985).

The bodies of Philomela, Marsyas, and many others feed the magician's box.

This poetry depends for its elegant existence on the exposure of violence (the flaying of Marsyas, the opening of Philomela's mouth).

MYRRHA'S BODY

The cutting out of Philomela's tongue is a transformative point in the tale, turning her from object of violence to perpetrator; her literal metamorphosis at the end is abrupt and relatively unstressed. But Philomela's mutilation has much in common with the metamorphoses suffered by many victims in the poem (mostly female); for example, Daphne into laurel, Io into a cow, Callisto into a bear, Actaeon into a stag, Arachne into a spider, and many into trees (Phaethon's sisters, Dryope, Myrrha), pools (Cyane, Arethusa, Byblis), and statues (Phineus's men, Niobe). All lose the ability to speak with a human voice; if they have been turned into animals, their efforts to speak, resulting in grunts, and their horror at this, are recounted. A favorite tactic of the poet's is to trace the metamorphosis step by slow step, particularly horrible in the case of Myrrha, whose metamorphosis into a tree encases her pregnant belly in wood (10.489–513): roots burst through her toenails, her skin "hardens with bark" (494), she voluntarily sinks her face into the uprush of wood (497–98), but her pregnancy advances and the birth splits her open, nor has she a voice with which to cry out (503–13). In the similar transformations of Phaethon's sisters and Dryope, one mother tries to pull the tree off her daughters and can only mutilate them (2.345–63); another, having herself unwittingly enacted a like mutilation (9.344–45), feels her breasts harden to her nursing child (9.349–93).

So the metamorphosis of women can be something special. In some cases, their previous beauty is grotesquely disfigured, and just those details are given that drive this home in Roman terms (Callisto's hairy arms, Io's comic bovine grin). In many cases, illicit sexuality is the catalyst for metamorphosis, and whereas a rape is normally not explicitly described, the text makes up for this in the metamorphosis. It is as if there were an analogic or developmental relationship between rape and mutilation. Indeed, several women are transformed as a *punishment* for their rape (Io, Callisto, Medusa), and two are killed outright by their angry fathers (Leucothoe, Perimele).

The place of rape in Ovid's texts is thus one where pleasure and violence intersect. Fear is beautiful; violence against the body stands in for rape.

SALMACIS'S DESIRE

The only rape scene in the *Metamorphoses* that involves explicit physical contact also involves a major role reversal: the rape of Hermaphroditus, a beautiful boy of fifteen, by the naiad Salmacis (4.285–388). Her proposition to him makes him blush, "and to have blushed became him" (330)—fear again beautiful, here at some length (331–33). Salmacis then spies on the boy as he first dips his toes in her pool, then strips; her voyeurism here (340–55) rivals that of Tereus.

Bathing scenes recur as incitements to lust in the poem (see esp. Arethusa); they combine the innocence and tempting solitude of other favorite settings (picking flowers, sitting on the riverbank, wandering on the beach) with an opportunity to show the body naked. Here both raped and (female) rapist strip down. Indeed, the passage overdetermines Salmacis's desire and marks its abnormality: not only she

but her *eyes* burn, and they burn like the sun (Phoebus, a familiar rapist in the poem) reflected in a mirror, *opposita . . . imagine* ("with opposed image," 349). She is a looking-glass rapist. The boy is compared (354–55) to an ivory statue or white lilies; her likenesses are not so nice. In a switch on the usual comparison of rapist to eagle or wolf, Salmacis is compared to a snake *attacking* an eagle and (unique in the poem) to an octopus (361–64, 366–67).

The result of this rape is twofold: Salmacis and Hermaphroditus, in response to a prayer of hers, become joined into one creature, a hermaphrodite, who speaks with the boy's (dismayed) consciousness; and he prays that the pool will henceforth turn any man who swims in it into a *semivir*, a "half-man" or eunuch (386), and gets his wish. Salmacis's consciousness is gone—the answer to her prayer?

Other women in the *Metamorphoses* pursue men out of excessive deşire (the maenads, Byblis, Myrrha, Circe), never with good results. But here the poet experiments with a female who has all the trappings of the most forceful rapist, and the interchange of roles here results in a permanent and threatening confusion of gender. We will see male rapists who dress as women, even a male raped because he is dressed as a woman, and these events turn out well; when a female acts male, the result is the unmanning of all men, and the narrative makes it clear that this is a bad thing (e.g., 4.285–86). A character in Book 12 shows what is at stake: Caenis, raped by Neptune and given a wish in return, replies (12.201–3):

> This injury produces a great wish
> now to be able to suffer/take in [*pati*] no such thing; give that I not be a woman—
> you will have given everything.

In the world of the *Metamorphoses*, a sensible request. As we will see, to *try on* a female role is important for Ovid; but that role, like the trying on, has its limits.

Rapes in the Ars Amatoria

It has been argued that the two scenes of rape in the light, witty *Ars* reflect Ovid's knowing use of an unreliable narrator, the *praeceptor amoris* ("teacher of love"), and that these scenes represent love that the *praeceptor* deplores (Myerowitz 1985: 66) or the poet rejects (Hemker 1985). If so, how is it that he has used the same voice in the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti* as well? At least it is safe to say the poet found this sensibility congenial.

The poem's attitude toward women has well been described as desirous of control (Myerowitz 1985; see Parker and Myerowitz in this volume). In this setting, we find the rape of the Sabines and the tale of Achilles and Deidamia, texts that share with the rapes of the *Metamorphoses* the content that lies between the brackets of narratorial persona.

THE RAPE OF THE SABINES (*AA.* 1.99–134)

At 1.99, the *praeceptor* sets up his account of the incident, so hallowed a part of Roman history, in terms of his own present and of the gaze. Women, he claims, now come to the theater to watch and be watched. The tale of the Sabines is adduced as

an *aition* (origin story) for this putative phenomenon; the setting of the rape in the theater is Ovid's innovation and suggests he is not just telling a story but staging a scene here. At 109, the *praeceptor* begins his description of the mass kidnapping:

> [Romulus's men] look about, and each marks for himself with his eyes the girl
> whom he wants, and with silent breast they ponder many things.
> [And while the performance was going on onstage, as the audience began to applaud,]
> the king gave the awaited signal of booty to the people.
> At once they leap up, professing their intention by shouting,
> and they lay desirous hands on the maidens.
> As doves, a most timid throng, flee eagles,
> and as the little new lamb flees the wolves once seen,
> so they feared the men rushing without restraint;
> the same color that had been before remained in no one of them.
> For there was one fear, not one face of fear:
> some tear their hair, some sit without sense;
> one, sad, is silent, in vain another calls her mother;
> this one complains, that one is stupefied; one stays, another flees;
> the captured [*raptae*] girls are led, a marital booty,
> and fear itself was able to adorn many of them.
> If any of them had fought back too much and denied her companion,
> the man picked her up himself, held to his desirous breast,
> and thus he spoke: "Why do you ruin your tender little eyes with tears?
> What your father is to your mother, this I will be to you."
> Romulus, you alone knew how to give bonuses to your soldiers;
> if you give bonuses like that to me, I'll be a soldier.

As in the Philomela episode, the men are here subjects of action verbs, especially of the gaze (109); the women begin as objects of action. This situation is reversed from 117–26, but, like Philomela, they act only to show fear. The simile of doves and lambs is similarly familiar, and was in fact a commonplace; so for Lucretia in the *Fasti* (below), and in Horace, *Epodes* 12.25–26 (a cross-sex travesty) and *Odes* 1.23 (to "Chloe"; see Montague, Chapter 11 in this volume). In the climax of the scene (121–26), the narrator sketches the crowd of girls in a series of short subject-verb clauses. But the summary subject—"girls"—is in apposition with a concrete noun—"marital booty" (125)—and what actions these women perform again only mark their vulnerability.

These clauses are remarkable in the Latin for the neatness of their construction, one figure balanced against the next by parison, chiasmus, and asyndeton, in the smallest possible space—Ovidian prestidigitation. By their brevity they achieve the effect of a miniature, with little figures mouthing inaudible cries and stamping inaudible feet. But we do not have to rely on aesthetics for a reading of the passage; the narrator tells us: "And fear itself was able to adorn many of them" (126)—the voice of the *praeceptor*, but also, as we have seen, that of the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti*.

At 127, the possibility of fighting back is conceded, but the man's action and speech are indulgent, amatory, and paternalistic (128–30). He marks only her tears,

annulling her resistance; carrying her off like a child, he talks of her "tender little eyes," as the poet Catullus did to his mistress in a poem where she weeps over a dead sparrow (c. 3).

Once again the narrator tells us how to read this, declaring that he would volunteer as a soldier himself if he could get such a reward (131–32)—recalling Ovid's beloved metaphor, *militat omnis amans,* "every lover is a soldier" (see Cahoon 1988). But metaphors often convey a literal perception, and a poet who sees love as comparable to battle might well see violence as part of love.

Remarkably, a recent critic sees this passage as a strong antirape statement by Ovid (Hemker 1985). The premise of the argument is that the *praeceptor* is so obviously wrongheaded that the reader sees the falsity of all he says, as if the whole poem were in quotation marks and the quotation marks nullified the content. Yet Hemker simultaneously argues that Ovid's description "sympathetically conveys the horror of the situation"; she singles out the climactic vignette of the women in flight as showing "the women's perspective" (45).

Such a reading blurs content; the women's fear is displayed only to make them more attractive. We have this myth, too, in comedies and action romances (squeaky voice: "Put me down!"); it is part of the plot. Likewise, for the Sabine women, there is really nothing to be worried about, because they are getting married. Their fears are cute (see Modleski 1982: 46), and the whole thing is a joke. Again the text uses women's fear as its substance (and see Myerowitz 1985 on the female as *materia* in the *Ars*). There are indeed quotation marks around the text, the marks that tell the reader "this is amusing"; but they act not to attack the content but to palm it off.

ACHILLES AND DEIDAMIA (*AA* 1.663–705)

Toward the end of Book 1 of the *Ars Amatoria,* the *praeceptor* illustrates his contention that no means yes (663–80) by telling the story of Achilles and Deidamia. He first suggests the lover should mix kisses with his wheedling words (663), whether or not the woman wishes to give them (664). If she fights and calls the lover "naughty" (665), nevertheless "she wants herself to be conquered in fighting" (666). A man who has taken kisses and not "other things" (669) was not worthy even to get the kisses (670). Once he got the kisses, how close he was to his "full desire" (671); such hesitance was not *pudor* ("modesty/chastity") but *rusticitas* ("country-bumpkin-ness"), the *praeceptor*'s bane (672). Then he generalizes (673–78):

> You may call it *vis* [rape/force]; that *vis* is pleasing to girls;
> "unwilling," they often wish to have given "what helps" [a euphemism].
> Whatever woman is violated by the sudden seizing of Venus [= sex], 675
> rejoices, and "naughtiness" serves as a gift/does them a favor.
> But a woman who has departed untouched, when she could have been forced,
> though she simulates gladness with her face, will be sad.

Women's emotions are consistently unreal throughout this passage—"unwilling" (674) must describe a feigned emotion; "naughtiness" (676) must be feigned

scolding as in 665; even their facial expressions are artificial (678). The pupil is to believe that women do have emotions with which to enjoy the experience, but there is apparently no way to tell for sure. What *does* a woman want? The deletion of women's voice here is even more thorough than in the tale of Philomela.

The *praeceptor,* skimming over the rape of the Leucippidae (see Sutton, Chapter 1 above), then launches into his illustrative set piece. Having delineated the beginning of the Trojan War in six lines, he takes the same time to show us the young Achilles in drag, disguised as a girl on the island of Skyros. And he is in drag when he becomes a rapist. He is put in to room with the royal princess, "by chance" (697), and—*voilà!—haec illum stupro comperit esse virum,* "she knew him to be a man by means of rape" (698), *stuprum* apparently the acid test. The *praeceptor* goes on to hint that it was no rape at all (699), saying that she desired it (700) and begged Achilles, now in armor and hurrying off to war, to stay (701–4). *Vis ubi nunc illa est?* he asks, smirking—"Where's that 'rape' now, eh?" (703). He concludes, "You see, as it's a matter of *pudor* for her to begin certain things first, thus it's pleasing to her to undergo them (*pati*) when another begins" (705–6). His point is that *pati*—"to suffer," "to be passive," "to be penetrated sexually"—is pleasing to women, and this is the mark of the woman, as *vis,* "force," is the mark of the man (see Parker, Chapter 5 above). When we want to know the gender of the adolescent hero dressed in women's clothing, the signifier of his maleness is his ability to commit rape. (Ovid was to repeat the idea of transvestite rape several times in the *Metamorphoses* [4.217–33, 11.310, 14.654–771]; see esp. 2.433, where Jupiter disguised as Diana embraces Callisto and *nec se sine crimine prodit*—"does not thrust out/reveal himself without crime"; gender revelation equals penetration.)

These two passages from the *Ars Amatoria* show both enjoyment of women's fear and objectification of women. Whereas *pati* is repugnant to men, here *pati* is women's nature, and they enjoy it (but contrast Caenis). As in New Comedy (Fantham 1975), the outcome of rape is happy. This idea also appears in the *Metamorphoses,* for example, for Orithyia and Boreas, immediately after Philomela; they marry, and Orithyia has twins (see Modleski 1982: 35). And it appears in the *Fasti* as well. But note again the intersection of pleasure with violence, now with fun in place of pain (Richlin 1983: 156–58). The erasure of female subjectivity is complete; the poem presents the female reader with no exit (Richlin 1984).

Rape in the Fasti: *Comic Relief*

The rapes in the *Fasti* are a mixed bag. Three (1.391–440, Priapus and Lotis; 2.303–58, Faunus and Omphale/Hercules; 6.319–48, Priapus and Vesta) are comic: a rustic and ithyphallic god attempts to rape a nymph/Amazon/goddess in her sleep and is interrupted in comic fashion before he succeeds. Three (5.193–206, Chloris and Zephyr; 5.603–20, Europa and Jupiter; 6.101–28, Crane and Janus) emphasize the fortunate outcome: Chloris marries Zephyr and becomes the goddess Flora, Europa gives her name to a continent, Janus gives Crane a goddess's power over all house boundaries. One (2.583–616, Mercury and Lara) stems from a punishment but also ends well, since Lara gives birth to twins. Finally, three are

"historic": the stories of Lucretia (2.723–852), Rhea Silvia (3.11–48), and the Sabine women, part II (3.187–234). Rhea Silvia and Lucretia, like the comic victims, are asleep as their rapists approach (cf. in the *Metamorphoses* only Thetis—who, however, also has to be tied down—and Chione); Lara is mute, and Lucretia is repeatedly said to be dumbstruck. Crane and Lara gain through rape the guardianship of boundaries; Chloris/Flora gives Juno the power to bear a child without a father. Common elements are the powerlessness of the women and the potential for unlocking that results from their penetration; hence the catalytic function of the historical women (see Joshel, Chapter 6 above). Like the Virgin Mary, they are lowly creatures whose very humility and penetration foster the creation of power.

As in the *Metamorphoses*, these rapes probably have Hellenistic models; but the model is the poet's choice, and footnotes do not cancel content any more than narrative structures do. These rapes echo the rapes of the *Metamorphoses* and *Ars Amatoria* and provide us with a new element: a paradigmatic structure.

RAPE AS JOKE

The three comic rapes are peculiar in that they are almost identical and seem to be Ovid's invention (see Fantham 1983); Priapus's attempted rapes of Lotis in Book 1 and of Vesta in Book 6 are the same in all but name. The shared elements are summed up in Table 8.1.

The poet clearly marks these stories as jokes, with labels or narrative elements ("everyone laughed") or both. Note the element of visual stimulus in the two longer tales: the nymphs show their breasts, legs, and naked feet through openings in their clothing (1.405–10); Omphale's fancy clothes leave her "well worth looking at for her gilded bosom" (2.310). All three tales remark the gaze of the potential rapist. But more, the voice of these women is one that is "asking for it." The circumstances allow license; most curious is the intimate dinner in the cave (a location marked as both ritual and bucolic), with its cross-dressing (both traditional and ritual) which turns the rape of Omphale into the rape of Hercules (see now Loraux 1990). The poet gives a detailed description of Hercules in Omphale's clothing, bursting the seams with his huge body (2.318–24); we recall Achilles' transvestite rape of Deidamia.[2] The targeted woman goes to sleep, but attention is focused on the stealthy approach of the god. Slowly he comes, step by step . . . he pulls the covering up from the bottom . . . we hold our breath; this is the technique of the striptease (or of the horror story, or of the Hellenistic love charm; Winkler 1990: 71–98), highly erotic, and the reader is seduced into the scenario. Such scenes were common in Roman wall painting (Fantham 1983: 198–99). The explicit descriptions of the god's erection embody the source of the narrative's desire—Faunus here assimilated to Priapus (2.346). Alarm, discovery, everyone laughs; the sight of the tumescent god in mid-rape is the primal scene of comedy.

THE COMIC STRUCTURE DRESSED UP

This comic structure recurs, surprisingly, in tragic and historic rapes in the *Fasti*, notably those of Lucretia, Rhea Silvia, and Lara.

TABLE 8.1. Comic Rapes in Ovid's *Fasti*

Common features	*Lotis (1.391–440)*	*Omphale (2.303–58)*	*Vesta (6.319–48)*
Marked as comic tale.		*Antiqui fabula plena ioci* (304).	*Multi fabula parva ioci* (320).
Women provide visual stimuli.	Scantily clad naiads reveal bits of their bodies (405–10).	Omphale goes walking with Hercules, all dressed up—*aurato conspicienda sinu* (310).	
Rustic gods look and are excited.	Satyrs, Pan, and Silenus are aroused by the nymphs (411–14); Priapus wants Lotis.	Faunus sees Omphale and Hercules and falls for her at once.	Priapus, who has been chasing nymphs and goddesses, sees Vesta (335).
An idyllic party is in progress.	A Bacchic rout in a forest glade.	Hercules and Omphale go into a cave, switch clothes, feast, and go to sleep in separate beds to keep pure for a Bacchic festival the next day.	A party with Cybele as hostess, including drinking, dancing, and wandering the valleys of Ida.
The woman targeted goes to sleep.	Lotis, at the edge of the group.	Omphale, in her bed in the cave.	Vesta, in the grass.
The rustic god approaches stealthily.	Long description of silent approach on tiptoe.	Long description of Faunus searching through the cave at midnight.	Priapus approaches with careful steps (337–38).
Details of the rape attempt.	Priapus balances himself (429) and pulls off Lotis's covers from the feet up (431); his erection is described later (437).	Faunus climbs onto Hercules' bed (misled by cross-dressing), lies down; his erection described (346); pulls up Hercules' dress from the feet up; surprised at hairy legs; tried "other things" (345–50).	*Ibat, ut inciperet*—"He was going up to her to begin . . ."
Sudden alarm.	Silenus's ass brays.	Hercules wakes up and dumps Faunus.	Silenus's ass brays.
Discovery.	Lotis runs away; Priapus exposed.	Faunus exposed in light.	Vesta gets up; all gather; Priapus runs away.
Everybody laughs.	Everybody laughs at Priapus and his erection (437–38).	Hercules, onlookers, and Omphale laugh at Faunus (355–56).	

Ovid's version of the Lucretia story follows closely the account in Livy's history of Rome (1.57–59; see Joshel, Chapter 6 above) but changes the focus significantly. The men, and the reader, spy on Lucretia and overhear her as she weaves by her bedside (2.741–58); the narrator comments on her looks (763–66); and Tarquin gloats on them in his memory—like Tereus. The staging of the rape enacts its meaning. Tarquin enters—*hostis ut hospes init penetralia Collatini*, "enemy as guest, he goes into the house/innards of Collatinus" (787); en route to Lucretia's

room (793), he "frees his sword from its sheath" (cf. *M.* 6.551, 10.475)—like Priapus.

The rape itself includes physical details unusual for Ovid except in the comic rapes (794–804). Tarquin presses her down on the bed; she feels his hands on her breast. Lucretia is compared to a lamb *lying under* a wolf (799–800). The narrative presents her mute thoughts, and her difficulties with speech continue in the scene that follows the rape (823–28). The physical details of her suicide are strikingly emphasized: she falls *sanguinulenta,* "bloody" (832), rather than simply *moribunda,* as in Livy; Brutus pulls the dagger from her "half-living" body (838); her corpse shows her approval by moving its eyes and hair; and, the last we see of her, her wound (not just her body) is being exhibited to arouse the populace—*volnus inane patet,* "her gaping wound lies open" (849). She ends as she began, as object of the gaze. As in the comic rapes, the viewer/voyeur sees, burns, and acts; in the tragic version, we get to see the woman die as well. We even get to see inside her wound, as inside Philomela's mouth. (Indeed, the poet moves from this episode to a brief allusion to Procne and Tereus, 853–56.)

Familiar elements recur in the rape of the Vestal Virgin, Rhea Silvia, by the god Mars (3.11–48), which resulted in the birth of Romulus, founder of Rome. We see her tripping down the path to fetch water; she sits on the riverbank; she opens the front of her dress (15–16) and pats her hair. And then she falls asleep in her idyllic surroundings. Mars sees her, desires her, and has her (21), and she wakes up pregnant (23)—"for, to be sure, the founder of the Roman city was within her guts" (*intra viscera*).

Lara's story involves, like Philomela's, not only rape but the punishment of sisterhood through silencing and mutilation. The story is given to explain who the *dea Muta* ("mute goddess") is (2.583), so presumably Lara is to be elevated to godhead; this is not narrated. What is told is that the naiad Lara has warned the nymph Juturna that Jupiter intends to rape her (603–4) and has also told Juno (605–6). To punish Lara, Jupiter rips out her tongue and gives her to Mercury, conductor of souls, to be taken down to live "with the ghosts in Hades, as the proper place for those who are silent" (609). En route they pass through a grove, where the mutilated Lara excites Mercury's lust: "she is said then to have pleased the god, her guide" (612). He "gets ready" for rape (613, *vim parat,* a recurrent phrase in the *Metamorphoses*). She tries to plead with him but cannot: *voltu pro verbis illa precatur,/et frustra muto nititur ore loqui,* "she begs with her face in place of words,/and in vain she struggles to speak with mute mouth" (613–14; the mimetic effect of 614 can be compared with that of *M.* 6.558, Philomela's tongue muttering into the ground). The instant result is that she becomes pregnant with twins who turn out to be minor gods (615–16)—end of story.

Familiar here is the incitement to lust inherent in the woman, the bucolic setting that serves as license, and the postponement of rape with compressed reference to male arousal (*vim parat,* both elliptical and insistent). In this case the postponement comes not from the tease of the rapist's stealthy approach but from the efforts of a woman who is both speaking and silent, like someone attempting to speak in a dream: terror made voluptuous. The muting and mutilation of Lara, like that of Philomela, propel stories not theirs.

Rape: The Insertion of Theory into the Text

To deal with these texts, I now present three theoretical models, in search of one that might offer a way out of the trap of representation.

The Pornographic Model: Rape Is Rape

Content analysis allows us to see past the legerdemain of style. As Laurie Colwin's poet points out in the first epigraph, "great art" partakes of the mechanisms of pornography. The episodic structure, the elision of the act of rape, and the physical cruelty of the *Metamorphoses* recall Angela Carter's analysis of Sade, especially of the scenarios of *Justine* (Carter 1978: 39, 44); indeed, Ovid's endless supply of innocent nymphs prefigures Justine's picaresque resilience, as the dissolution of bodies in metamorphosis prefigures the fantasies of the Freikorps men (Theweleit 1987: 171–204). When Susan Griffin says of the pornographer, "he gives woman a voice only to silence her" (S. Griffin 1981: 40), can we not apply this to Philomela? Lara? Lucretia?

The pornographic model, then, allows us to take Ovid's rapes literally; to realize that they are, if not the whole text, an important part of it, not to be ignored; and to consider what we want to do with a canon that includes many such texts, finally weighing their hurtfulness in with their beauty. We want a way out. But then we must keep faith with history. Maybe Sade should not get so much credit for initiating modern sensibility; maybe history provides no way out. The average inhabitant of Rome enjoyed spectacles in reality that Sade could only bear in his imagination. And we must recall that to a Roman of the literary class, a story about a raped woman with a Greek name would have a peculiar resonance, suggesting not only the abstract figures of Greek erudition but the looted marble figures in his garden, the enslaved (= sexually accessible) and living figure serving him dinner. Or serving her dinner.

The Cross-sex Fantasy Model: To Rape Is to Be Raped

> *Et qui spectavit vulnera vulnus habet.*
> [And a man who has seen wounds has a wound.]
>
> —Ovid *AA* 1.166

The question of the experience of Ovid's audience raises the possibility that the pornographic model is incomplete. If, as theorists of fantasy argue, subjectivity oscillates, could Ovid have provided, even enjoyed, a female subjectivity? Before I consider what good this would do the (female) reader, I need to establish how it might have been possible in Ovid's world.

The construction of Roman sexuality and textuality included two features of interest here. First, Roman men of the literary class often professed to be bisexual (Richlin 1983, esp. 220–26). Normative adult male sexuality, as expressed in love poetry, gossip, and political invective, took the form of attraction to both women and adolescent males. Freeborn adolescents, though in principle off limits, were at

least conscious of their attractiveness to older men, and there was no lack of slave boys. Attraction of adult males to other adult males was, in these texts, the source of loathing. Being penetrated (*pati*) was seen as a staining of the body (which illuminates the claim, discussed above, that women enjoyed it; we recall Caenis).

Our sources on the construction of Roman women's sexuality are too indirect and fragmentary to tell us much; they were expected to marry, often before age fifteen, and might well divorce and remarry.

Second, the theater at Rome in Ovid's time (Lucian *On Dancing* 34) included an extremely popular form, pantomime, in which a male dancer was the central figure, often playing a woman. A line of musicians and singers sang the story in Greek, and a second actor played any necessary minor characters; but the first dancer was the star and danced all the main roles (hence *panto-mimus*) of the play (Beare 1955).

Pantomime sets Ovid's rapes in 3-D. That it was so popular testifies to a special ambivalence in Roman culture, which commonly stigmatized dancing as effeminate (Richlin 1983: 92–93, 98; cf. Pliny *Panegyric* 54.1). Meanwhile, the satirist Juvenal indicates that pantomimes sometimes depicted the sexual misadventures of mythic heroines: Leda (6.63), Pelopea (who bore Aegisthus to her father Thyestes), and Philomela (7.92).

Gossip records that dancers were lusted after by the rich and famous (so of Bathyllus and Maecenas; Tac. *Ann.* 1.54.3). Satire avers that women found the dance of rape sexually exciting (Juv. 6.63–66):

> When effeminate Bathyllus dances the pantomime Leda,
> Tuccia can't control her bladder, Apula squeals,
> as if in an embrace, suddenly and a wretched sostenuto.
> Thymele pays attention; then rustic Thymele learns.

"Leda" would be the rape of Leda by Zeus in the form of a swan. Is the male actor called effeminate because he is? Because he is dancing? Because he is playing a woman? Because he is dancing a rape? Because he is dancing a man/bird/god raping a woman? Does the women's purported reaction have an objective correlative? We think of Mick Jagger in drag. That such a spectacle would have been considered dangerous for a respectable young man is attested by a letter of Pliny (7.24), in which he describes the situation in the house of Ummidia Quadratilla: a racy old aristocrat, she considered her troupe of pantomime actors a good relaxation for herself, but she always sent her grandson away to study when they were about to perform.

Was this any more to Ovid than part of his social milieu? It seems so. The Elder Seneca's rhetorical memoirs include a sketch of Ovid, the star student, in his college days; Seneca ends by observing that "Ovid rarely declaimed *controversiae* [arguments], and only *ethicas* [ones involving character portrayal]; he much preferred *suasoriae*" (*Controversiae* 2.2.12). *Suasoriae* were speeches given in character, usually of a famous historical person; this penchant for dramatics pervades Ovid's poetry. Other writers wrote for the *pantomimi*, especially when they needed money: the son of one of Ovid's fellow students, who Seneca complains "polluted his talent" (*Suasoriae* 2:19); the first-century poets Statius, who Juvenal claims sold an *Agave* to the *pantomimus* Paris to make ends meet (7.82–92), and Lucan, who

wrote fourteen *salticae fabulae*, "scripts for the dance" (*Lucani vita*). Ovid explicitly denies having done any such thing—even though his poems are appearing on the stage, "danced to a full house," during his exile (*Tristia* 2.519–20, 5.7.25–28; see Myerowitz, Chapter 7 above on this apologia).

The seriocomic dialogue *On Dancing*, by the Greek writer Lucian, composed at Antioch in Asia Minor between A.D. 162 and 165, testifies to the conservative view of pantomime as effeminate (1, 2, 3, 5), both in itself and in its effect on the audience; to the frenzy of the audience (2, 3, 5); and to the prominence in the performance of the man dancing the woman's role, especially a raped woman (2, 28). The crusty interlocutor describes being in the audience of the pantomime (2):

> Watching an effeminate man mincing vainly about with dainty clothing and unbridled songs and imitating sex-crazed dames, the lewdest of those in antiquity, Phaedras and Parthenopes and Rhodopes. [Parthenope was a Siren who yearned for Odysseus; Rhodope married her own brother.]

Lucian describes the dancer's flowing silk garb (29–30, 63, 66) and his masks—five for one performance would not be unusual. The mask was beautiful (unlike those of comedy and tragedy) and had a closed mouth.

But what most suggests a tie with Ovid is Lucian's list of the topics a good *pantomimus* must know by heart (37–61), which tallies closely in order, arrangement, and content with the *Metamorphoses* as a whole (Galinsky 1975: 68–69, 132, 139). It includes the tale of Procne and Philomela (40): "and the [daughters] of Pandion, both what they suffered in Thrace and what they did." Also the tale of Pelopea (43), which Juvenal mentioned as well—a father seduces a daughter. The *pantomimus* is to learn, in particular, transformations (57) and, most of all, the loves of the gods (59)—that is, their rapes of goddesses and women. This list mentions fifty-six women's roles, including two historical figures (Stratonice and Cleopatra), plus one for a man in drag: Achilles on Skyros. This recalls not only the tale of Achilles and Deidamia in the *Ars*, inset into the text like a dramatic interlude, but also the *Fasti* and the attempted rape of Hercules (which Fantham suggests came from pantomime; 1983: 200–201); the freeze-frame tableaux of the Sabines running (set in the archaic theater and forerunner of the experience of women at the theater); and the rapes by gods in drag in the *Metamorphoses*.

Describing a great dancer at the court of Nero, Lucian stresses the way he could tell a whole story in gesture. This might explain one curiosity of Ovid's style; look again at 6.551–57 (Philomela's rape). With one hand, Tereus unsheathes his sword; with the other, he grabs Philomela by the hair; with the other, he bends her arms behind her back; with the other, he chains her wrists; with the other, he grabs her tongue with a pair of forceps; and finally he uses the sword to cut out her tongue. And compare 6.338–68, in the comic tale of the goddess Latona and the Lycian farmers: throughout, Latona carries her newborn twins in her arms (338); they even play a part in the drama (359); at 368, the angry goddess dramatically raises her palms to the sky to curse the oafish farmers. What has happened to the babies? Perhaps this is not baroque illogic but cubist logic; perhaps this transformative poem derives its poetry from motion, the motion of the dance.

Lucian also draws a direct comparison between dancing and rhetoric (65), basing it explicitly on the shared art of impersonation, especially as found in rhetorical exercises, Ovid's old specialty.

The connection between Ovid's poetry and the pantomime accords well with the model of fantasy derived from psychoanalytic theory, in which the subject is said to oscillate among the terms of the fantasy (Fletcher 1986; C. Kaplan 1986, based on the work of Laplanche and Pontalis). Thus, in one of the basic schemas, "a father seduces a daughter," the subject can be in the place of "father," "daughter," or even of the verb "seduces." The interrelations among this concept, Ovid's poetry, and the pantomime are most striking. The model exactly describes the performance of the dancer—first one character, then another, with the essential need to enact the interaction between the characters; and not just any characters but, often, the father seducing a daughter (Pelopea) or an equivalent (Leda). Or vicariously: Tereus imagining himself in Pandion's place *so that* he could fondle Philomela. The poet's fascination with the reversal, whereby a [daughter] (Medea, Scylla, Byblis, Myrrha) seduces a [father], is delimited by the extreme anxiety of the Salmacis episode, where the female has become subject rather than object, and the male is forced not only to become but to remain female.

Roman poets generally published their works by giving readings, usually to circles of friends; and we recall the male Roman's experience of being the object of the male gaze, as an adolescent. So can it be said that Ovid empathizes with his rape victims? Certainly—as a great *pantomimus* might; but not with any but a delicious pity for them, a very temporary taking on of their experience, their bodies. How beautiful she looks in flight; one woman feels the hot breath of the rapist on her neck, another is caught bathing naked, a third taken by surprise on her way to visit her sister. For a few the rapist even first dresses as a woman, so that the phallus can be a surprise and teach its lesson about gender again. I imagine the poet himself (or the narrator, or both) "dancing" his characters one by one: a father, seduces, a daughter.

Ovid's special circumstances lend themselves to this imagination. The *Metamorphoses* was completed when Ovid was in exile, for offenses connected with his poetry (Goold 1983), to the cold wilderness of Tomis. The muted victims, the artists horribly punished by legalistic gods for bold expression—Marsyas, and especially Arachne—read like allegories of Ovid's experience. Philomela weaves a message to her sister; the unvoiced Cyane with her "inconsolable wound" (5.426) gives Proserpina's belt to Demeter as a sign. At this level it might be possible to argue for Ovid as metapornographer. But if the *Metamorphoses* lays bare a cruel cosmos, it does so voluptuously.

The pleasure of the style and the pleasure in the content are congruent. Moreover, the universe described horrifies and allures us precisely because it is out of kilter, as is the style with the content. Perhaps this is why rape is such a suitable scenario for the *Metamorphoses,* which comes to involve dissolution of the boundaries of body, genus, gender, and genre. (And not rape alone; the poem is full of incest, the mating of human with statue, cross-sex transformations.) Such a phenomenon has been taken into account for Greek literature (Bergren 1983; Zeitlin 1985a) but not for Latin. But perhaps Roman culture, so obsessed with boundaries,

is precisely the place for it. Rape as a passport to death, or to dissolution of the body, may have made sense to Ovid and his audience.

Compare a story in Tacitus (*Annals* 5.9):

> It was then decided that the remaining children of Sejanus should be punished, though the rage of the mob was thinning out, and many were soothed by the executions already carried out. Therefore they are carried into the prison, the boy understanding what was about to take place, the girl still unaware, so that she was asking over and over, "For what misdeed, and where was she being taken? She would not do it again," and "she could be cautioned with the ordinary children's beating." The authors of that time say that because it was considered unheard-of for a virgin to be submitted to a capital execution, she was raped by the executioner with the noose lying next to her; then, with their necks squeezed, bodies so young were thrown out on the Gemonian steps.

The execution was, except for the rape, normal for political prisoners in those abnormal times (see G. Williams 1978: 184). The story appears again, generalized, in Suetonius (*Tiberius* 61.5); editors compare a case during the triumviral proscriptions (a time Ovid lived through), reported by the much later writer Dio (47.6), in which a young boy was put forward into the class of men—made to assume the *toga virilis*—so that he could legally be executed. The sixteenth-century classicist Lipsius comments that the same reasoning underlies the case of Sejanus's daughter—that once having been raped and deflowered, *mulier videretur,* "she would seem a woman."

The case of Sejanus's daughter comes from A.D. 31, the accounts of it from the early second century A.D.; but the logic of it, rape as a *rite de passage,* atrocity as it is to these two writers, informs their texts as it does Ovid's.

We begin to look for ways out; the model begins to feel like a trap.

First, what about the female members of Ovid's audience? Is it possible that this poetry includes a female subjectivity? But we have no evidence of any raised consciousness among Roman women; I think rather of Angela Carter's description of the women listening eagerly to a male speaker in Sade's *Philosophy in the Boudoir* (1978: 143): "Since he is good enough to class them with the masters, they, too, will be permitted to tyrannise as much as they please. Libido . . . is genderless." If women are invited to identify across gender boundaries, the process is not necessarily revolutionary (C. Kaplan 1986).

Isn't this just the pornographic again? In Sade, and commonly, the assumption of a female voice is a central technique (Kappeler 1986: 30; and see Parker, Henry, Joshel in this volume); even dominance by women, when written into the scenario, is just another thrill (Carter 1978: 20–21). Fantasy of movement within the system is not escape from the system.

But some argue that fantasies mean something completely different from what they say—for example, that fantasized violence provides an excuse for cuddling (Russ 1985), or that the mutilation of the love object is a covert expression of anger at the object's power (Modleski 1982: 24–25). The implication that the degree of the "covert" anger correlates directly with a real power is very disturbing when

applied to fantasized violence against women (for a glaring example of this, see Auerbach 1982). Rather than congratulate ourselves, we must bear in mind the disparity between the reality of women's historical power and the size of the shackles historically placed upon it.

Like the pornographic model, the cross-sex fantasy model offers no exit from gender hierarchy. The female is still the site of violence, no matter what the location of the subject. Even if the magician and the lady change places, *he* is still taking *her* place.

A Political Model: Rape Is Rape, Resistance Is Possible

> *Proprium humani ingenii est odisse quem laeseris.*
> [It is proper to human nature to hate one whom you have hurt.]
> —Tacitus *Agricola* 42.3

We need a political model that will both describe the magician's act and suggest a way to end it. Let me postulate that the problem is not gender but hierarchy: within hierarchy, violence is a right, and the control of violence diminishes liberty. An anarchic system is thus a precondition for the deletion of the pornographic. Though escape from hierarchy has seemed impossible, I would postulate that there are some "open" discourses that permit it: theory, mathematics, nonrepresentational art, music. Other, "closed" systems—humor, fantasy, narratives, film, and representational art—all interrelated, form the bars around hierarchy.

The structure of these closed discourses is political, and they have four main characteristics: (1) They contain a cue that says any item is untrue, creating what I call the "Archie Bunker fallacy" ("It's just a joke!"). Ovid actually asserted this in his poems from exile (e.g., *Tristia* 2.491–96). (2) Content follows function and is not arbitrary. (3) The relation between each item and reality depends on the status of the users; these discourses maintain the status quo. (4) Historically, though perhaps not necessarily, the hierarchy has been gendered. The position at the bottom, so often a woman's, has never been pleasant; something in it "exposes the meatiness of human flesh" (Carter 1978: 140; see Kappeler 1986: 63–81; Rabinowitz, Parker, Brown in this volume).

Where does this leave us? On the one hand, history weighs heavy, and closed discourse is more comfortable than open. Revolutionary discourse is intrinsically unamusing. How ephemeral, how dry this essay is compared with Ovid's poetry! And insofar as it amuses, it fails. On the other hand, when we see problems of discourse as systemic, we can gauge our task. The female can no longer be by definition the site of violence—nothing can. What *happens* if we say, as Kappeler does (221), "Art will have to go"? Maybe there is something else. Meanwhile we must use what exists to show what is wrong.

Conclusion

How *can* women read? And why should we read Ovid? How badly do we need this history? I borrow an answer from Toni Morrison. We're stuck with Philomela; she's

like Beloved, the dearly beloved ghost of grief, and to be blind to her is not to exorcise her. We need to know her and keep faith with history.

The battle for consciousness must go on (see de Lauretis 1984: 185) and focus on concrete political improvements in women's lives. As classicists, as scholars, as teachers, as women and men who speak to other people, we can fight in this battle. What can we do?

(1) We can speak and write about antiquity for other feminists and people outside the academy. We can remake our disciplines (Hallett 1985). We can move outside of Classics, and we can open up the boundaries of Classics itself; that's what this book is trying for.

(2) We can blow up the canon. Canons are part of social systems. We recognize the one we have as dysfunctional. It must and will change; we can surely critique the pleasure of the text without fear of breaking anything irreplaceable.

(3) We can claim our lack. We can ask, where am I in this text? What can it do for me? What did it do to its audience?

(4) We can appropriate; we can resist. The old stories await our retelling; they haunt our language anyway. And if the only names we have to speak in are names of blood, maybe we can speak the blood off them. History is what groups write as they come to power.

NOTES

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Pro comite stuprata trucidata: postremo munere mortis.

1. All translations are my own and are as close to word-for-word as possible.

2. This tale bears a striking resemblance to a current joke: Batman sees Superman, who looks distressed. Batman asks why. Superman says he had flown down to the beach to look at women, when he saw Wonder Woman lying naked in an enclosed backyard, writhing and groaning sexily. So he zoomed down and . . . did it! Batman is horrified. But wasn't she *scared?* Did she *scream?* "Did *she* scream!" says Superman. "You should have heard the Invisible Man!" (Collected Norwich, Vermont, 1981.) There is the same transferral of the rape from female to male object (and from human to divine spheres). A similar flying-and-spying takes place in the tale of Mercury and Herse (*M.* 2.708ff).

PORNOGRAPHY AND REPRESENTATION IN GREECE AND ROME

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